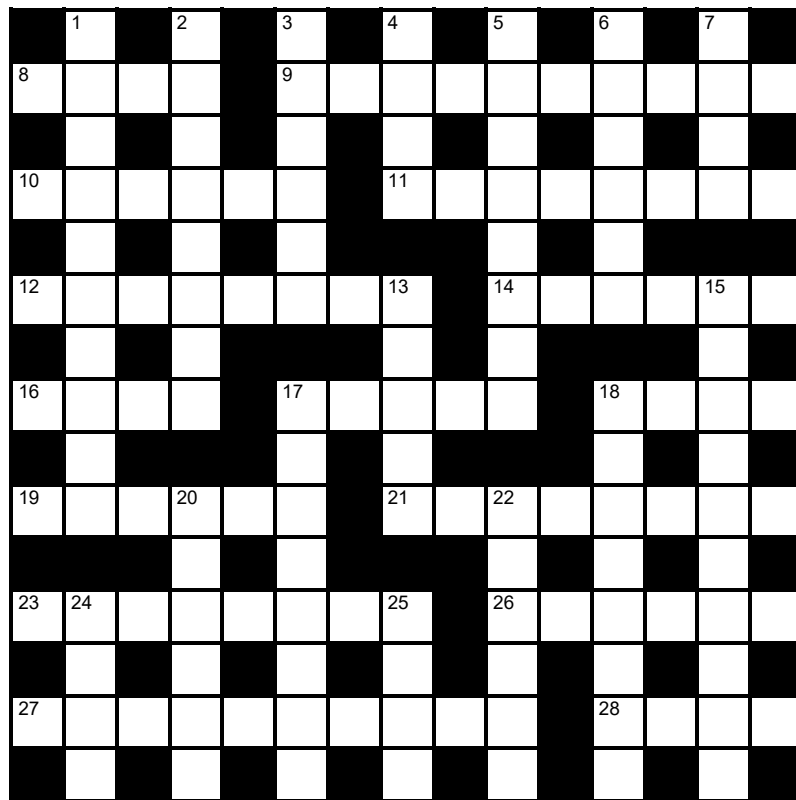


*There is a ghost theme that appears in 16 solutions.
18ac is not (as clued here) in Chambers.*

**Across**

- 8** Volunteers consuming a French prickly pear (4)
9 Capital city cross after grotesque caper; disappointing follow-up (10)
10 Reptile wandering in Switzerland when newts wrongly removed (6)
11 Strong fabric; a new outfit finally for police officer (8)
12 Problem bar rashly includes this over generous provision of good things (8)
14 Eventually small and cosy (2,4)
16 Some private tuition for housewife (4)

- 17** Coronet changing hands for a comic entertainer (5)
18 Good advanced essentially modern Nigerian language (4)
19 Extremes of gear including thick cord for one feeling his way (6)
21 Small island well lit? No, it's the principal stage illumination (3,5)
23 Handheld firework could be a gem (8)
26 Vagrants' tense rages (6)
27 Bird's a young unmarried woman (10)
28 Cup of tea for the Cockney lady who cleans (4)

Down

- 1** Cunningly mediate our instrument used to measure hearing sensitivity (10)
2 Spy a tangled hair on carpet (4,4)
3 Powerful abrasive tool partly smooths and eradicates (6)
4 Greek characters to fully satisfy in retrospect (4)
5 Twisted conspirator lacking subtle art; venomous creature (8)
6 Mum is backing period of fasting (6)
7 Crude nationalist producing further crop (4)
13 In Lanark sneak about small secluded retreat (5)
15 Sailor's masculine

identity; southern switched-on fellow (10)

- 17** Unconcerned, having no vehicle, we hear, going round Europe. (8)
18 Showing the way in grand university intake's first hop (8)
20 Mindlessly repeat Press Association republican rubbish (6)
22 Incessant talk in Holyrood of unstable treaty (6)
24 Zest when turning up to plaster with cow dung (4)
25 Piece of sacrilege to irritate someone (4)